

# Indiana House of Representatives

## News and Information

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### **VAN HAAFTEN: NEXT STEP TAKEN IN FIGHT AGAINST METH**

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana lawmakers moved closer today to giving final approval to legislation that provides the latest step in stopping the spread of meth, efforts that have been led by State Rep. Trent Van Haaften (D-Mount Vernon).

Representatives today passed Senate Bill 444, which contains recommendations offered by Van Haaften and other members of the Methamphetamine Abuse Task Force. Van Haaften is the only legislator to serve on the task force, which was created by the Indiana General Assembly to create and implement an ongoing strategy to combat the fastest-growing illegal drug in the country. The bill now returns to the Senate for concurrence with changes made in the House.

"In recent years, the Legislature has taken several important steps to try to halt the production and use of meth," Van Haaften said. "These efforts have included tougher penalties, programs to treat addictions and educational initiatives to help identify efforts to purchase the chemicals needed to make the drug.

"The problem has been that meth is relatively easy to produce because it uses many substances that can be found around the house, and it can be made practically anywhere, including homes and vehicles," he continued. "In that light, this task force plays an important role by being able to respond to new trends in making meth, and providing quick potential solutions. Senate Bill 444 contains some of those solutions."

The bill focuses on ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, two items used to make meth that are found in many cold medicines. Senate Bill 444 classified both as Schedule V controlled substances, which means that products with these ingredients could only be sold at a pharmacy and distributed by a licensed pharmacist.

"This section of the bill follows many Midwestern states that are also passing legislation to reduce the numbers of meth labs," Van Haaften said. "We also expand the list of identified chemical reagents or precursors that are used to manufacture meth, a change that reflects the growing number of substances that can be used to make this drug."

Other provisions of the bill call for creation of a data base cataloguing all meth labs that have been seized. Local fire and public health departments will be notified of these locations in order to be aware of potential health risks.

"Law enforcement agencies who find children under 14 years of age at a meth lab will have to notify the division of family and children services," Van Haaften said. "A judge will be able to consider a pattern of illegal use or manufacture of meth when determining bail, and treatment programs can become a requirement as a condition for bail. Finally, the Indiana State Police would be able to develop a meth watch program for retailers, consumers and the general public."

Medical experts say that highs from meth last 10 times longer than those caused by cocaine, and users often demonstrate violent behavior, hallucinations and convulsions. Since the drug is produced using many volatile chemicals, there is a risk of explosions and environmental contamination.

"Meth is a problem that requires constant vigilance, and through measures like Senate Bill 444, we will be able to address the problem at its core and help rid ourselves of this evil drug," Van Haaften concluded.

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